



## **Bangladesh, CAR, Libya, Nigeria, Syria, Yemen**

### **Global ETC Teleconference**

**Date: 17/11/2021    TIME: 13:00 UTC**

#### **Attendance**

Chair	Caroline Teyssier	(Global ETC), UAE
CCC/Intelsat	Peter Davidson	United States
CDAC Network	Fanman Tsang	South Sudan
Cisco Crisis Response	Matt Altman	United States
Gov't of Luxembourg	Roland Nurenberg	Luxembourg
IOM	Farida Yesmin	Bangladesh
UNHCR	Alexander Thomas	Denmark
UNICEF	Yusuf Oloyede	Libya
WFP	Omar Namaoui	Algeria
	Ekue Ayih	Bangladesh
	Geneva Costopulos	Bangladesh
	David Pickering	Bangladesh
	Shaown Chowdrey	Bangladesh
	Francis Koroma	CAR
	Gisele Mekuatedefo	CAR
	Nadege Ndassimba	CAR
	Phyza Jameel	Italy
	Maria Saleh	Italy
	Ahmed El Sheikh	Libya
	Hikmat Akad	Libya
	Burak Sezgin	Nigeria
	Mohamedouabou Ndiath	Senegal
	Atmaja Sembiring	Syria
	Oscar Caleman	Thailand
	Opart Ongwandee	Thailand
	Claire Roach	UAE
	Ruaa Nasser	Yemen
World Vision International	Anthony Kimani	United Kingdom

## Agenda

1. Bangladesh update
2. Central African Republic update
3. Libya update
4. Nigeria update
5. Syria update
6. Yemen update
7. AOB

## Minutes

### 1. Bangladesh

#### Security situation

- Humanitarian operations were scaled back for two days at the beginning of November in Cox's Bazaar due to tensions surrounding the local elections. Despite a fatal attack on one of the candidates, there was no significant effect on ETS operations and the security situation has been since relatively calm.
- The number of reported COVID-19 cases in Bangladesh has decreased to 300 a day from 600 a day last month.
- Approximately 33 percent of the population has received one dose of COVID-19 vaccination, and 22 percent of the population is now fully vaccinated.
- Quarantine is no longer required for fully vaccinated staff entering Bangladesh provided that the second dose was received at least 14 days before travel.

#### ETS Response

- Three new sites have been established with data connectivity, bringing the total number of data connectivity sites in Bangladesh to 39, taking into account two sites that were decommissioned earlier in the year. The sites span three operational areas and serve 11 NGOs and five UN agencies.
- Data connectivity continues to be provided at the five Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI) centres established in the camps for COVID-19 treatment.
- Security communications continue to be maintained. Planned upgrades have not yet been completed due to the inability to secure approvals and licenses from the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC). Approximately 960 humanitarians use the ETS security communications network every month.
- The ETS team is working on the Joint Response Plan (JRP) for Bangladesh. It was agreed at the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG)-level to submit a budget of US\$ 3.2 million for the ETS project, which is a 17 percent reduction from last year. This reflects the fact that donors have sent a clear

message that they will not contribute at the same level as last year. Funding for the project will be raised through the regular funding mechanism.

- It is now confirmed that the new permanent ETS coordinator will join in January. Ekue Ayih will continue to cover the coordination role in the interim.
- The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP) are undertaking a third assessment mission on the island of Bhasan Char following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between UNHCR and the government regarding the relocation of refugees to the island. Other UN agencies, including the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) will join the assessment mission next week.
- The implementation of the IT plan will be carried out by WFP, but will not use the inter-sector coordination approach used in Cox's Bazaar; this will not be part of the ETS response
- There were already 18,500 refugees on the island, and an additional 2,000 were scheduled to have be relocated by the 16<sup>th</sup> of November however the relocation was cancelled. The plan is to have 50,000 people on the island by April and 100,000 by the end of the year.

## **2. Central African Republic (CAR)**

### **Security situation**

- The security situation remains unstable and unpredictable, with escalating protests against the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSCA) creating serious challenges for the safety of staff.
- Two WFP staff sustained minor injuries recently when they were arrested and temporarily detained during random searches carried out in Bria.
- The volatile security situation, criminality, and poor road conditions due to the rainy season are all having an effect on the delivery of assistance to remote areas.

### **ETC response**

- With the assistance of the Global ETC team, ETC CAR submitted a budget of almost US\$ 2 million for the 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). This is a large increase from last year's budget of less than US\$ 1 million.
- The ETC is continuing to provide Internet connectivity services to 700 humanitarian actors from 12 UN agencies and 56 NGOs across 11 sites.
- The team is working to resolve ongoing issues with the Internet connectivity in Batangafo.
- The 1212 call centre in Bangui is receiving close to 3,000 calls per week, of which 70 percent relate to the COVID-19 vaccine. The call centre has begun to receive calls about other issues, such as other health concerns and reports of domestic violence.

- The ETC is also providing a free charging station and phone booth service to 40,000 Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in a camp in Bria. On average 60 people have been accessing the phone booth per week since its launch. A mission is planned in collaboration with implementing partner INTERSOS to increase the visibility and awareness of the service.
- The Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) in Bria is recording approximately 70 cases per week of people seeking information on humanitarian services or registering feedback and complaints.
- An [article](#) published by the Global ETC on several online platforms, including LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook has brought attention to the ETC services for communities projects in CAR.
- The ETC has been working to finalise the implementation of Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) recommendations that were made in 2018. The implementation has been delayed due to various obstacles including limited equipment, access restrictions, and the need for additional technical expertise. The ETC is now working with the UN Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS), UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP to finalise the implementation of the remaining recommendations through an inter-agency approach.
- A mission was recently conducted in Paoua to re-establish power and security communications and another joint mission with UNHCR will take place soon in Kaga Bandoro. Both locations are considered priority locations due to the volatile security situation.
- This month the ETC programmed 25 newly procured radios for INTERSOS and programmed another five for the NGO *Triangle*.

### 3. Libya

#### Security situation

- Tensions are increasing in advance of the elections scheduled for 24 December and have escalated since the recent announcement of the candidacies of Khalifa Haftar and Saif al-Islam Gaddafi and statements made by military commanders questioning the legitimacy of the elections.
- Because of this, security has recommended taking extreme precautions, including moving all international WFP staff to Tunis before 15 December.
- The number of COVID-19 cases continues to increase in Tripoli, with an additional 408 new infections reported by the National Disease Centre. This brings the total number of cases since the beginning of the pandemic to 370,000 with 5,300 deaths.
- Two United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) drivers in Benghazi tested positive for COVID-19, leading to a seven-day lockdown of the Benghazi hub that ended two days ago. UNSMIL flights are still suspended, putting additional pressure on the UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) which is still operating.

#### ETS Response

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- The ETS has submitted and approved its projects for the extension of the HRP into the first six months of 2022.
  - The TESS specialist arrived in Benghazi on 4 November to begin his assessments but was unable to continue to Tripoli as planned due to the COVID-19 lockdown of the Benghazi hub. Meetings with UNDSS and Libyan Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) were held virtually and the ETS team supported the TESS mission to gather all the information required to complete the assessments.
  - The planned meeting with the Libyan Telecommunications Commission was cancelled as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) did not issue the required approval.
  - A meeting of the ICT working group was held in which the new ETS coordinator introduced himself and the TESS specialist presented the initial findings of his mission and gathered feedback from the members.
  - A second meeting of the ICT working group will be scheduled later to discuss the final report and recommendations of the TESS mission.
  - The TESS specialist assisted in diagnosing issues with the Benghazi VHF network coverage during his mission. It was discovered that the repeater was damaged and the height of the antenna needed to be increased.
  - Repeater kits have been ordered to replace the damaged one, and governmental approval was granted to procure a spare repeater. The ETS is also looking into the possibility of installing a tower to increase the height of the antennas for better coverage.
  - As a temporary solution, base stations were connected to the repeater antennas. This has successfully expanded the coverage of the radio network to Benghazi airport, which is important for security reasons.
  - As a part of its work to enhance security communications in Libya, the ETS is procuring equipment for the Benghazi radio room, including a new computer and workstations, satellite phones, and a dedicated backup power solution.
  - The ETS continues to provide customer support and connectivity at the WFP-managed Benghazi hub.
  - The ETS is engaging with UNHCR to increase the uptake of the ETS-provided free Internet service at the Community Day Centre (CDC) in Tripoli. Visibility items will be provided to the new location as well as brochures translated into English, Arabic, and Amharic to sensitise the users of the CDC to the availability of the Internet service.
  - The *Tawasul* inter-agency call centre continues to receive calls from the affected population related to humanitarian issues and COVID-19 as a part of the Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) established by the ETS. The most commonly raised issues relate to Protection. Very few calls are received regarding COVID-19.
  - Two requests have been received to extend the coverage of the CFM to northern and eastern parts of Libya. The ETS is looking into the use of media channels to promote the CFM to Libyans and has received an offer from a local media channel.

- The ETS met with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to discuss the CFM business model and funding mechanism. The ETS is exploring with OCHA the possibility of conducting an evaluation of the usefulness of the CFM to different agencies' decision-making processes.
- The ETS in Libya is currently facing a serious issue with funding; the current funding status is at only 18% of the requested US\$ 880,000 in the HRP, which will only sustain the ETS until the end of the year. While UNHCR has committed to providing funding for the CFM, other sources of funding to support other ETS activities are currently being explored.
- The ETS is looking into further opportunities to provide services to communities, including the provision of facilities for affected populations to undertake work skills training.

#### **4. Nigeria**

##### **Security situation**

- The security situation in the northeast remains volatile. Overnight missions are currently allowed in Bama, Banki, Gwoza and Monguno, however this can change at any time based on security recommendations.
- UN staff entering Nigeria can now proceed directly to Maiduguri and take a PCR test to end their quarantine on the second day after arrival rather than the seventh if they have been vaccinated.
- The rate of COVID-19 in the northeast is minimal compared to other locations in Nigeria.
- There is still no power in Maiduguri and a fuel shortage is expected soon that will affect mobility.

##### **ETS Response**

- The ETS is fully funded until the end of March 2022 with last year's ETS budget. The budget is being updated for 2022, which may allow the budget to extend further than March.
- The newly recruited ETS coordinator is expected to arrive in early December. In the meantime, Mithilesh Chaubey will support Bhawana Upadhyay with ETS coordination for rest of month while Burak Sezgin is on Rest and Recuperation (R&R).
- The ETS headed an assessment mission to Dikwa last week to plan for the reinstallation of ETS services there. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has finalised 80 percent of the reconstruction of the hub, including the Security Operations Centre (SOC) and the bunker, which will now be concrete buildings in the same location as the demolished prefabricated structure.
- Most of the outdoor equipment in Dikwa appears to be physically intact, including the VSAT dish, cabling, and antennas. However all of the indoor equipment is gone, including one-month old hybrid solar power equipment.
- The ETS is working with the HQ connectivity team to purchase replacements for the indoor equipment from corporate provider Marlink. The team is planning to use hybrid solar power equipment that was intended for use in Rann, as the planned service expansion to that location has been delayed.

- The ETS plans to res-establish its services in Dikwa by January 2022.
- The ETS will carry out VSAT maintenance in Monguno next week and another mission to Ngala for the new IOM office installation the following week.
- There have been some issues with solar hybrid batteries in Banki due to high temperatures. IOM has replaced them temporarily while waiting for new batteries from the vendor.
- Bama has been chosen as the location for a new in-camp announcement / public addressing system to support affected communities with access to information. The ETS team may approach the Dakar team for assistance with this project.
- The ETS is planning to extend Internet connectivity from the Maiduguri hub to the UNHAS office at Maiduguri airport in response to their request for help in establishing reliable connectivity to support helicopter missions. The ETS is also establishing a radio room for UNHAS, who will request authorisation to use the radio link and mast. The plan is to implement a remote SOC with an airband for helicopters so that UNHAS can communicate with them from Maiduguri hub.

## 5. Syria

### Security situation

- There has been no significant change in the security situation since last month.
- The tensions in north-eastern and north-western Syria have somewhat de-escalated.
- In the south, the situation in Dera'a Governorate is showing increasing signs of instability.
- The Syrian Government received over 1.3 million doses of Sinovac through COVAX this week. Their stated target is to reach 20 percent of the population by the end of this year. Currently 4.1 percent of the population is vaccinated.
- Over the last week, the Ministry of Health (MoH) has registered 1,454 new cases of COVID-19 in government-held areas of Syria. 655 people reportedly recovered from the disease and 51 people died.
- The deteriorating socio-economic situation across the country has caused food and fuel prices to soar and has affected the availability of electricity. The national average price of WFP's standard reference food basket reached its highest ever recorded level since monitoring started in 2013, increasing by nine percent between September and October 2021.

### ETC Response

- The ETC has successfully conducted an inter-agency workshop in Latakia from 8-10 November 2021 attended by 21 ICT personnel from 10 UN Agencies based in Syria.
- Advanced VHF training with ICOM France is postponed to next year due to COVID restrictions.
- The ETC is working to improve the performance of Internet connectivity services in the inter-agency hub in Deir Ez-Zor by establishing an additional fibre link via a second internet service provider (ISP). A

request for approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to activate the link has been submitted through UNICEF.

- The ETC has launched its 2021 user satisfaction survey to gather feedback from all humanitarians using ETC services in their activities and to identify areas for improvement.
- The ETC plans to upgrade data infrastructure for all common operational hubs. The delivery of equipment from the manufacturer has been delayed to mid-December 2021 due to the global shortage of semiconductor chips.
- The ETC is expecting the final MoFA approval for the importation of push to talk (PTT) devices and is following up on the clearance of 20 VHF devices and six satellite phones for use in UNDSS SOCs.
- A shipment of solar power spare parts and telecommunications tool kits held in customs since May 2021 have been cleared and received by the ETC in Damascus. The toolkits will equip the hubs with needed telecommunications tools and equipment, while the solar power equipment (mainly inverters) will serve as contingencies for the existing solar power systems installed in all UNDSS-managed SOCs.
- The ETC is reviewing all commitments and pre-commitments made in 2021 for action prior to financial closure in December 2021.

## 6. Yemen

### Security situation

- The situation remains mostly calm in most parts of Yemen, with the exception of Hodaydah and Marib where clashes have been reported. The situation has returned to normal in Hodaydah, while it remains unsettled in Marib.

### ETC Response

- In response to increased needs at the UN guesthouses in Aden, the ETC has upgraded connectivity services via a fibre access solution which will connect the residential sites to the ETC network in Aden.
- The ETC is also finalising a technical assessment to expand its connectivity services to the new UN Common Accommodation Facility (UNCAF) in Sanaa, which consists of three villas hosted by WFP.
- The ETC is also funding and supporting a five-kilometre extension of fibre-optic connectivity to 90 District in Aden. This will provide stable connectivity to the NGOs in the area, including Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), CARE International, and ZOA International.
- Since April 2021, the ETC has been providing data connectivity services to all passengers in Aden international airport, including humanitarian responders and commercial passengers. The ETC is working on finalising the second payment for the connectivity project.
- In response to a request from the Supreme Council for the Management and Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (SCMCHA), OCHA is coordinating with the ETC to assess the feasibility of setting up IT network infrastructure and providing videoconferencing equipment to their new offices in the north of Yemen. This project will support cluster coordination with the national authorities.





- Following an interagency request, the ETC has developed and is piloting a cloud-based visitor access system at the UNCAF in Sanaa to facilitate the process for visitors to access the compound. The new system will reduce the approval processing time and will enhance record-keeping on visitors to the compound.
- UNDSS provided positive feedback and a few requests for adjustments to the visitor access system after receiving a demonstration from the ETC. The ETC is working to integrate their requests and plans to implement the system soon.
- After two years of correspondence, authorisation was finally obtained from the national security authority in Sana'a to bring VSAT satellite connectivity equipment to Hodaydah and Hajjah in the north of Yemen. The VSATs will be provided by a local supplier and installed in early to mid-November.
- Two shipments of ETC equipment are pending pre-importation approval in Djibouti. One of these shipments contains equipment to expand security communications services in Aden, in support of the implementation of TESS recommendations.
- The project proposed by NYC Medics to establish a VHF communication network for 20 ambulances in Aden city is facing a 40 percent funding shortage. The ETC is exploring different options and engaging with OCHA to secure the required funding for the project.
- The ETC has engaged with the preparations for the Global Humanitarian Overview and submitted its needs based on the budget projection of US\$ 3.8 million for 2022.
- The Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) process will take place in mid-November

## 7. AOB

- ETC partner emergency.lu has deployed a staff member to Burkina Faso to receive a delivery by military aircraft of 50 solar-powered refrigerators to the government of Burkina Faso to support the COVID-19 pandemic response.

**Teleconference/Meeting ended at 14:02 UTC**

**The next Global ETC Joint Teleconference will be held on 15 December.**

## Acronyms

ACF	Action Contre la Faim
BGAN	Broadband Global Area Network
CFM	Common Feedback Mechanism
CO	Country Office
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
ETS	Emergency Telecommunications Sector
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
ICT	Information and Communications Technology



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IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISP	Internet Service Provider
IT	Information Technology
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
LTA	Long-Term Agreement
MNO	Mobile Network Operator
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Syria)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
RSOC	Remote Security Operations Centre
SOC	Security Operations Centre
TESS	Telecommunications Security Standards
UNCAF	United Nations Common Accommodation Facility
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSMIL	United Nations Support Mission for Libya
VHF	Very High Frequency
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

All information related to ETC operations can be found on the website: [www.ETCluster.org](http://www.ETCluster.org)

For more information, or to be added or deleted from the mailing list, please contact: [Global.ETC@wfp.org](mailto:Global.ETC@wfp.org)

**Minutes:** Claire Roach, Global ETC Information Management Officer, WFP